

TALES OF TRAVEL, ADVENTURE AND SUSPENSE

In the Desert

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USTAD

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KARL MAY
Born: 25th February 1842
in Hobenstein-Ernstthal
Died: 30th March 1912
in Radebeul, Saxony

KARL MAY

TALES OF TRAVEL, ADVENTURE, AND SUSPENSE

Karl May is one of the great masters of the pen. This series of breath-taking adventure and suspense is in the classical tradition of Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling and Zane Grey. The travels and exploits of Karl May's heroes cover the world as "Old Shatterhand" in the American West of the Seventies, as "Kara Ben Nemsî" in North-Africa and the Middle East in the days of Abdul Hamid II and in other local guises in the Cordilleras of South- and Central America. Split-second action and suspense are combined with an impeccable moral tone, that have made these stories long-time favourites of parents, teachers and the Clergy. Problems of sex are entirely absent. These are stories of men in action against the hazards of nature or in collision with brutal opponents though conflicts are always resolved on the basis of Christian ethics.

While publication statistics on reader interest and age groups indicate a predominance of adolescents, Karl May's magic is so complete that his works have always been read by a high percentage of adults. This master of the pen has kept reader interest at the stupendous best-seller level of 12 500 000 — twelve and a half million copies sold, over the years.

The German publishers have developed circulation data for decades, through a system of questionnaires which reflect an accurate picture of reader interest on the basis of age groups, business, social and cultural characteristics. The questionnaires dealt initially with two representative titles, „In the Desert“ — the volume of adventures in North-Africa and Arabia and „Treasure of the Silver Lake“ — a juvenile, laid in the Wild West. These two volumes are amongst the most successful from the viewpoint of sales, one with an aggregate of 430 000; the other with 630 000 copies, the maximum circulation for a single title.

USTAD-Verlag, Bamberg, and the associate publisher in New York desire to contribute to German-American amity in the release of selected German authors in English Editions. It is planned to follow the current volume "In the Desert" with succeeding volumes in the same series. The sequence, variety of titles and impressive geographical and historical range of Karl May's collected works comprise 65 separate titles, as shown right.



KARL MAY'S
COLLECTED WORKS

- 1 In the Desert
- 2 Old Kurdistan
- 3 Baghdad to Istanbul
- 4 Balkan Canyons
- 5 Stara Planina
- 6 The Persian Smuggler
- 7 Winnetou I
- 8 Winnetou II
- 9 Winnetou III
- 10 Sands of Disaster
- 11 Sign of the Dragon
- 12 Rio de la Plata
- 13 In the Cordilleras
- 14 Old Surehand I
- 15 Old Surehand II
- 16 Land of the Mahdi
- 17 Father of Five Hundred
- 18 The Last Slave Hunt
- 19 Captain Caiman
- 20 The Cliff Castle
- 21 Krüger Bey
- 22 Satan and Iscariot
- 23 On Alien Trails
- 24 Wild West Christmas
- 25 Road to Mecca
- 26 The Avenger
- 27 Ruins of Babylon
- 28 Realm of the Silver Lion
- 29 The Petrified Prayer
- 30 Peace on Earth
- 31 Ardistan
- 32 Mir of Djinnistan
- 33 Winnetou's Heirs
- 34 Personal Pronoun
- 35 Vultures of the Llanos
- 36 Treasure of the Silver Lake
- 37 The Oil Man
- 38 The Mestizo
- 39 The Inca Heritage
- 40 The Blue Red Methusalah
- 41 Slave Caravan
- 42 The Prince of Dessau
- 43 Forest Shadows
- 44 The Black Smuggler
- 45 Scepter and Hammer
- 46 The Island of Jewels
- 47 God of the Aztecs
- 48 The Magic Elixir
- 49 Heights at Dawn
- 50 Town of the Prophet
- 51 Castle Rodriganda
- 52 The Sun God Pyramid
- 53 Benito Juarez
- 54 Trapper Hawknose
- 55 The Dying Emperor
- 56 The Road to Waterloo
- 57 Secret of the Marabout
- 58 The Spy of Orry
- 59 Lords of Greifenklau
- 60 Allah il Allah!
- 61 The Dervish
- 62 In Death Valley
- 63 Fur-Hunter and Cossack
- 64 The Forest Specter
- 65 The Stranger from India

An appraisal of statistics, of course, must take cognizance of the violent economic dislocation of the reading public, during World Wars I and II viz:

Arts & Professions	1920	1930	1940	1950
Craftsmen, Workers	15.7	9.0	3.9	5.9
White collar Group	20.3	12.0	7.8	8.2
Intellectuals Educators	2.5	2.7	1.2	2.7
Military Personnel	2.7	0.4	0.2	—
Students, junior, male	38.6	56.5	68.3	72.5
Students, junior, female	1.8	3.7	5.6	6.3
Women, miscel	2.1	1.6	2.5	2.4
Unclassified	16.3	14.1	11.5	2.0

General Age Groups				
Mature Persons	35.0	20.2	24.0	26.5
Adolescents	57.5	69.0	63.2	72.0
Unclassified	7.5	10.8	12.8	1.5

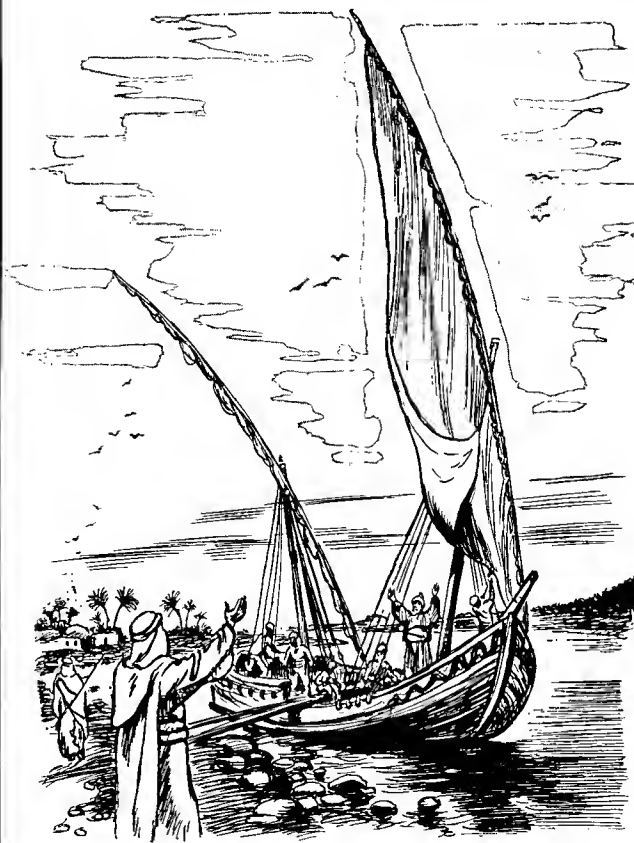
Sales Records; Origin				
Previous readers	43.7	45.1	34.6	50.3
Recommended Gifts	8.4	8.5	6.8	10.0
Christmas Gifts	19.8	27.5	35.0	30.3
Occasional Gifts	12.0	10.8	20.4	7.0
Unclassified	16.1	8.1	3.2	3.4

Certain conclusions are fairly obvious: (1) A growing percentage of adolescent readers. (2) Increasing trend of utilizing the Karl May books as gifts. (3) Fair percentage of adults vis-a-vis adolescent readers. (4) The books continue to sell and maintain a firm footing, suggesting recognition of the moral and ethical tone of these stories.

That subtle appeal appears to be strongest in the youth group; it may yet become a means to heal the wounds of war, to soften and diffuse tragic recollections? That can best be accomplished by establishing a fraternal bond between German and American youths, in the friendly realm of impeccable literature, common to both. Said the Director of the "United States Information Agency": "... A sharing of Karl May's beloved stories with the English reading public impresses me as a promising move toward the development of a fuller rapprochement between American and German youth. This is indeed a worthy project..."



An illustration from IN THE DESERT



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As late as February 1954, the Austrian Ministry of Education is on record in an altogether favourable appraisal of Karl May's work:

"... In view of the moral and cultural deterioration, in the wake of disastrous wars, we recommend the Karl May series for age groups from 12 to 18. Volumes 1 to 33, dealing with travel adventures, offer not only first-rate entertainment but also substantial geographical and ethnographic information." This is attested in comments by noted explorers viz. Prof. Dr. K. Guenther, Dr. W. Weisl and others. The latter said: "Where I have crossed the tracks of Karl May, in my own explorations, I have found men and milieu to be much the same as in my boyhood recollections of his fascinating stories."

To solid educational qualities must be added a high degree of moral and ethical principles, as a refreshing foil to the moral and psychic distress of our days. Dr. Alfred Biese, the famous literary critic, said: "... Karl May's idealized heroes have become veritable friends and counsellors to millions of readers, in days of anguish and sorrow, as no other figures in world literature..."

These views are confirmed by numerous letters from America, of which the following is typical:

Karl May Verlag

October 13/1954

Dear Sirs,

Years ago, as a little boy, I read my first Karl May story: "The Secret of the Marabout". Someone told me then that I would soon outgrow these juveniles. That was seven years ago. I have grown older and I have left juveniles behind me — but Karl May has retained his hold on me, more than any other writer.

I have followed Kara Ben Nemsî from the plains of the Desert to the mountains of Ustâd, as if I were his inseparable companion Hadji Halef Omar.

I have a feeling that these stories contain a message — a deep inner meaning which I seek to grasp. Karl May has come to mean more to me than a thrilling writer. He has become a spiritual guide and friend.

Sincerely

St. Louis 16
Missouri

Jacob Tillinger

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